

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks. Claims 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, and 11 are pending in this application, of which claim 1 is independent. In the Office Action dated June 15, 2005, claims 1, 3, 4, and 7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 8-131215 in view of U.S. Design Patent No. D468233 ("*Della Valle*") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,590,444 ("*Krauss*"). Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 8-131215 in view of *Della Valle*, *Krauss*, and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 3,979,934 ("*Isenmann*"). Claims 10 and 11 were objected to as being dependent from a rejected base claim, but were indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent form and include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In response, Applicants have amended independent claim 1 to more particularly define the invention. No new subject matter has been added. Support for the amendments to claim 1 may be found, for example, in Figs. 4 and 15. Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's rejections.

In the rejection of claim 1, the Examiner conceded that, in JP 8-131215, "the convex portion is not trapezoidal and the concave portion does not extend through the thickness of the front face of the female body so as to exist on the front surface and [JP 8-13125] lacks the stepped surfaces on all sides." Office Action, page 4. Applicants submit that additional differences exist between JP 8-131215 and amended claim 1.

In particular, amended claim 1 further recites that "the front surfaces of the female body and the male body are formed in a same plane, while the rear surfaces of

the female body and the male body are formed in a same plane.” This feature has the added benefit of providing a smooth appearance on both the front and rear surfaces of the buckle. See Figs. 4 and 15. Applicants submit that JP 8-131215 fails to show or suggest the above feature at least because it shows, for example, in its Fig. 6, a straight portion 18 as being raised from buckle surface 17. Thus, the buckle of JP 8-13215 has bumpy and uneven surfaces, which is in contrast to being “formed in a same plane,” as required by amended claim 1.

Moreover, in addition to the Examiner’s concession that “the concave portion [of JP 8-13215] does not extend through the thickness of the front face of the female body so as to exist on the front surface,” Applicants submit that JP 8-13215 also fails to show or suggest “the concave portion being formed on at least one surface of the front and rear surfaces of the female body or the male body,” as required by amended claim 1. In contrast, JP 8-13215 teaches placement of the concave portion on an inner side of the female body 2 surface. Moreover, JP 8-13215, as illustrated in its Fig. 1, merely shows a concave portion 27 being formed under a surface of female body 2 and the surface thickness of female body 2 being significantly reduced where concave portion 27 is formed. Applicants submit that because concave portion 27 is intended to receive an insertion from the male body and be subject to force during the insertion process, a reduced surface thickness makes concave portion 27 more susceptible to breakage.

Along the same lines, Applicants submit that JP 8-13215 additionally fails to show or suggest “the convex portion being formed on at least one surface of the front and rear surfaces of the female body or the male body,” as required by amended claim 1. As illustrated in Fig. 1 of JP 8-13215, convex portion 28 is formed below the surface

and on an inner side of the male body, so it may be inserted into concave portion 27, which is formed under the surface of the female body. Thus, neither concave portion 27 nor convex portion 28 are "formed on at least one surface of the front and rear surfaces of the female body or the male body," as required by amended claim 1.

In the rejection of claim 1, the Examiner relied on *Della Valle* and *Krauss* to cure the defects of JP 8-13215. Fundamentally, Applicants submit that there is no motivation to combine *Della Valle* with JP 8-13215. *Della Valle* completely fails to show or suggest "a male body having flexible insertion legs, the female body and the male body being engaged with each other by insertion," as required by amended claim 1. As illustrated in its Fig. 2, *Della Valle*'s buckle is merely held together through the engagement of a convex portion of a male body with a concave portion of a female body. Therefore, at least because *Dalla Valle* fails to show or suggest the basic feature of "a male body having flexible insertion legs, the female body and the male body being engaged with each other by insertion," as required by amended claim 1, *Dalla Valle*'s buckle is fundamentally different from the invention of amended claim 1 and fundamentally different from the buckles of JP 8-13215 and *Krauss*. Thus, Applicants submit that there is no motivation that would cause a person skilled in the art to combine *Dalla Valle* with JP 8-13215 and *Krauss* to arrive at the Applicants' amended claim 1.

In addition, Applicants submit that even when combined, *Dalla Valle* and *Krauss* would fail to cure the defects of JP 8-13215. More specifically, the Examiner, in the rejection of claim 1, relied on *Dalla Valle* and *Krauss* to show that "the convex portion in the first butting portions protrudes between the flexible insertion legs in a trapezoidal form in which a front end is lightly narrowed, while the concave portion is concavely

dented between where the flexible insertion legs are inserted in the trapezoidal form with the inlet expanded," as required by amended claim 1. As explained on page 15 of the present application, the above required structure helps prevent lateral rocking.

Dalle Valle, as mentioned above, completely fails to show or suggest any flexible insertion legs and therefore also fails to show or suggest "the convex portion in the first butting portions protrudes between the flexible insertion legs in a trapezoidal form in which a front end is lightly narrowed, while the concave portion is concavely dented between where the flexible insertion legs are inserted in the trapezoidal form with the inlet expanded," as required by amended claim 1. Krauss also fails to show or suggest the above feature. Specifically, while Krauss discloses an interlocking key with a trapezoidal form, the key is on the side of the buckle and is not disposed "between where the flexible insertion legs are inserted in the trapezoidal form with the inlet expanded," as required by amended claim 1. Thus, Applicants submit none of the structure disclosed in JP 8-131215, *Dalle Valle*, or Krauss have concave or convex portions in a trapezoidal form that lie between the flexible insertion legs as recited in amended claim 1 and, as a result, cannot prevent rocking in a lateral direction as achieved by the buckle of amended claim 1.

Additionally, *Dalle Valle*, as shown, in its Figs. 1, 7, and 8, has male and female bodies that have oppositely sloped surfaces. When engaged together, the buckle of *Dalle Valle* creates a surface angle where the oppositely sloped surfaces of the male and female bodies come together. Thus, Applicants submit that *Dalle Valle* teaches away from a buckle having front surfaces and rear surfaces that are formed in the same plane, as required by amended claim 1.

In summary, Applicants submit that the cited references, alone or in combination, do not disclose, teach, or suggest the invention recited in amended claim 1. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request allowance of claim 1. Claims 3, 4, 7, 8, 10 and 11 depend from claim 1, and, therefore, should also be allowed at least because of their dependency on the allowable claim 1.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully requests reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

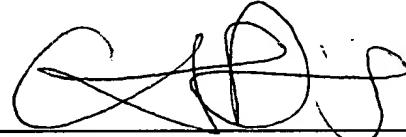
Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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